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Get heart-healthy for American Heart Month

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By Capt. Joseph McQuade, M.D., director for Public Health, [Naval Hospital Jacksonville](#)



What are you doing to get heart-healthy? Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States, claiming a life every minute—and February is American Heart Month. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), one in every three deaths is from heart disease and stroke—that’s 2,200 deaths each day.

We’re are all potentially at risk for heart disease—and sadly, that includes our youth, as childhood obesity rates increase at an alarming rate. Risk factors include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, cigarette smoking, sedentary lifestyle, high fat diet, and being overweight or obese.

There are many steps you can take to lower your risk of developing heart disease: maintain a healthy weight, choose healthy meals and snacks, exercise regularly, don’t smoke, manage stress, limit alcohol, and manage your cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure—the single most significant risk factor for heart disease. Making positive changes in any one of these areas can make a positive difference in your health.

If you already have a medical condition like high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes, there are things you can do. Manage high blood pressure—when your blood pressure stays within a healthy range, it reduces strain on your heart, arteries and kidneys. Get your cholesterol checked annually. Reduce your blood sugar to protect your vital organs. Take medicines as prescribed. And talk to your health care provider about the best ways to prevent or treat the medical conditions that lead to heart disease.

Remember, small changes matter and it’s never too late to live a healthier life.

For health promotion and wellness resources visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center website [here](#).

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